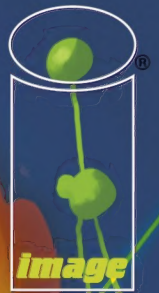


BRIAN K. VAUGHAN  
FIONA STAPLES



CHAPTER  
SIXTEEN

# Saga™

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CHAPTER  
SIXTEEN

# Saga

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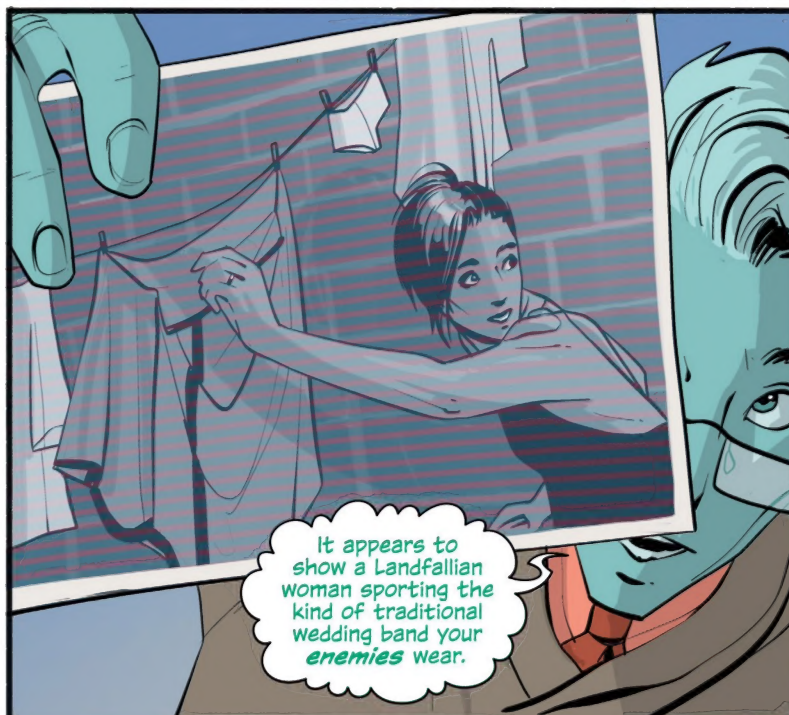
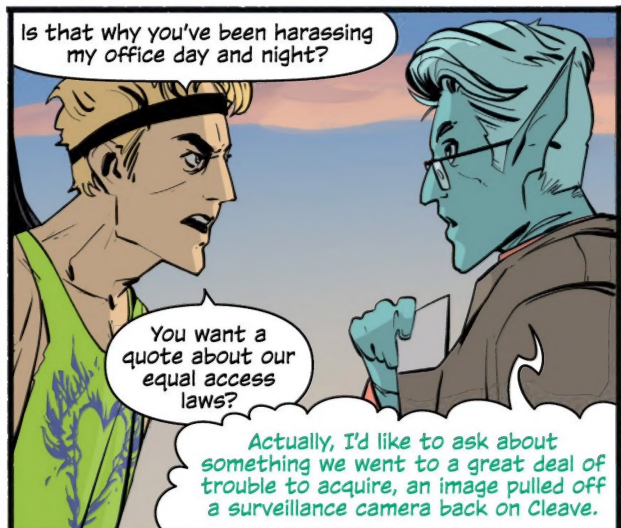
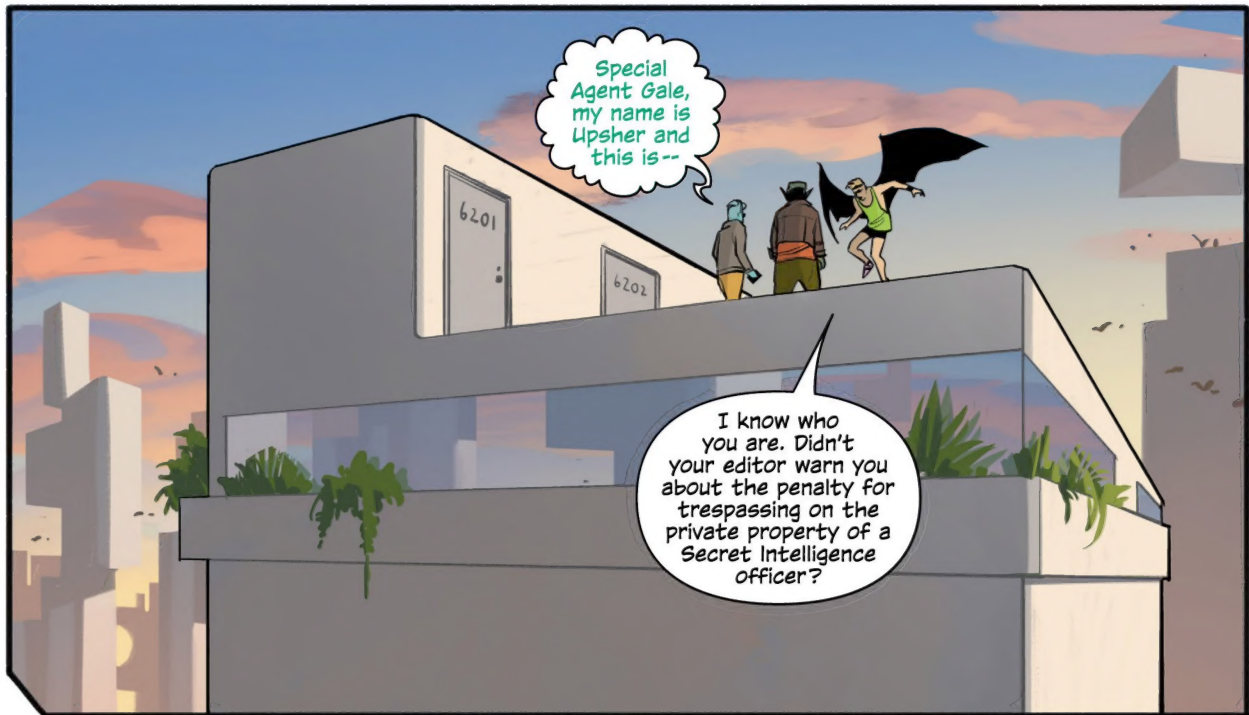
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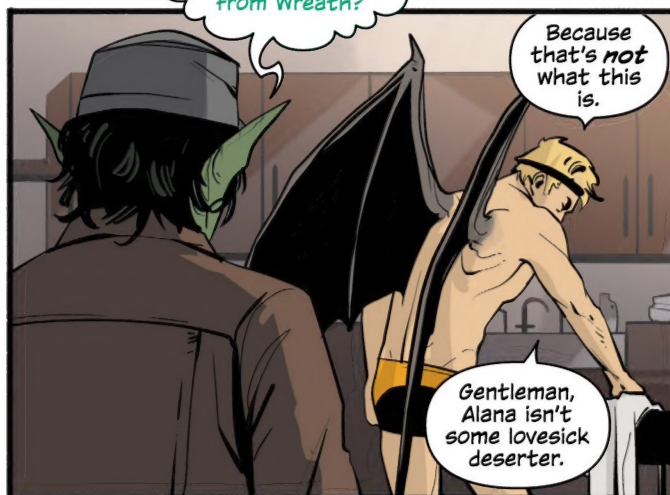


So you can **confirm** this is the "kidnapped" soldier Private First Class Alana?

I'm not confirming shit.

In the interest of planetary security, I'm begging you to spike whatever story you think you have here.

Why are you guys so worried about people finding out some Coalition grunt might have fallen for a guy from Wreath?



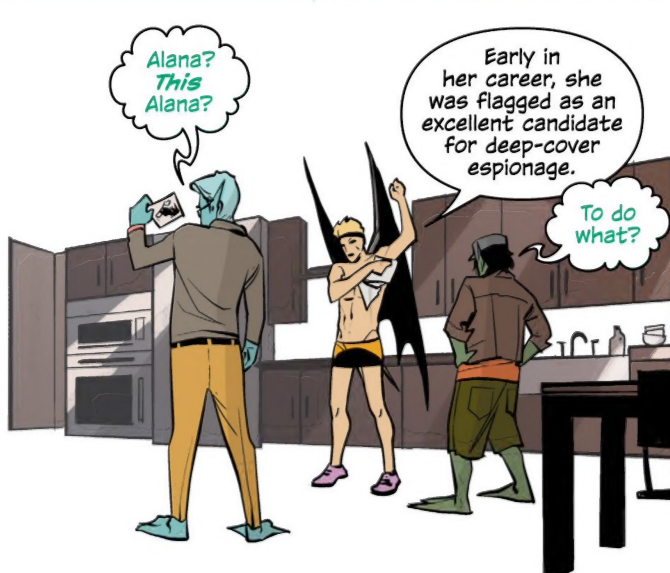
Because that's **not** what this is.

Gentleman, Alana isn't some lovesick deserter.



She's a **spy**.

Maybe the best we've ever had.



Alana? **This** Alana?

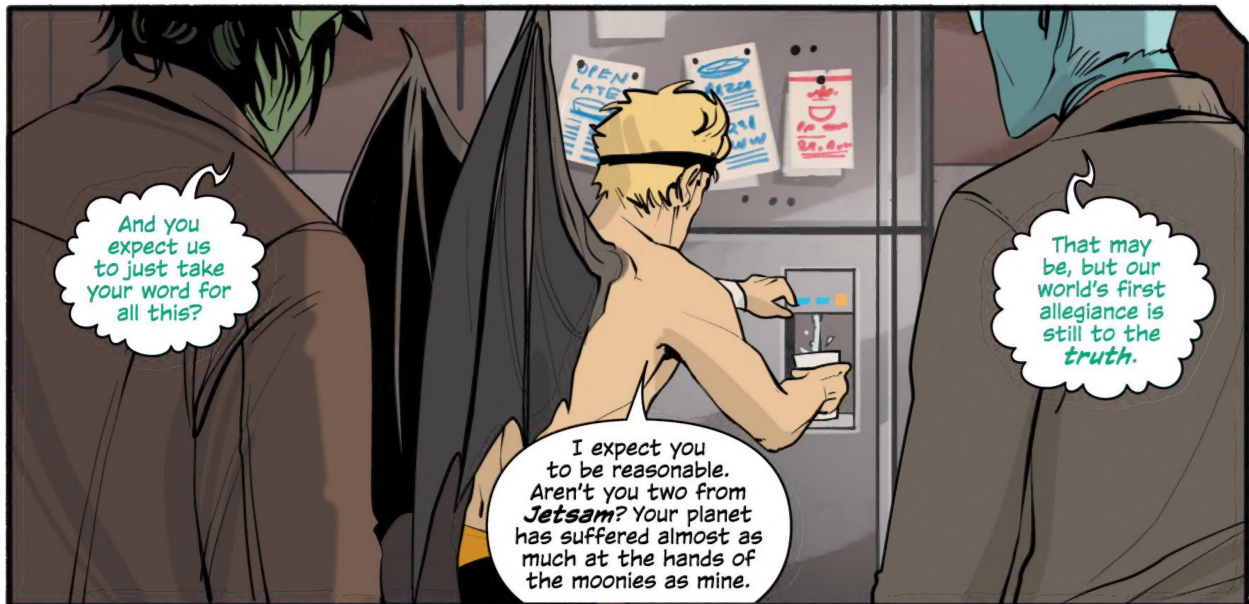
Early in her career, she was flagged as an excellent candidate for deep-cover espionage.

To do what?



I wish I could tell you more, but I'm not exaggerating when I say that **trillions** of lives are at stake.





And you expect us to just take your word for all this?

That may be, but our world's first allegiance is still to the truth.

I expect you to be reasonable. Aren't you two from **Jetsam**? Your planet has suffered almost as much at the hands of the moonies as mine.



Right, you people are *so much* more principled than the awful warmongers you feed off of.

As long as you happen to be part of Jetsam's **heterosexual** population, of course.



You guys still treat your faggots like crap, huh?



An openly gay man couldn't have much of a career on your world, could he? Hell, I doubt he could have much of a life.

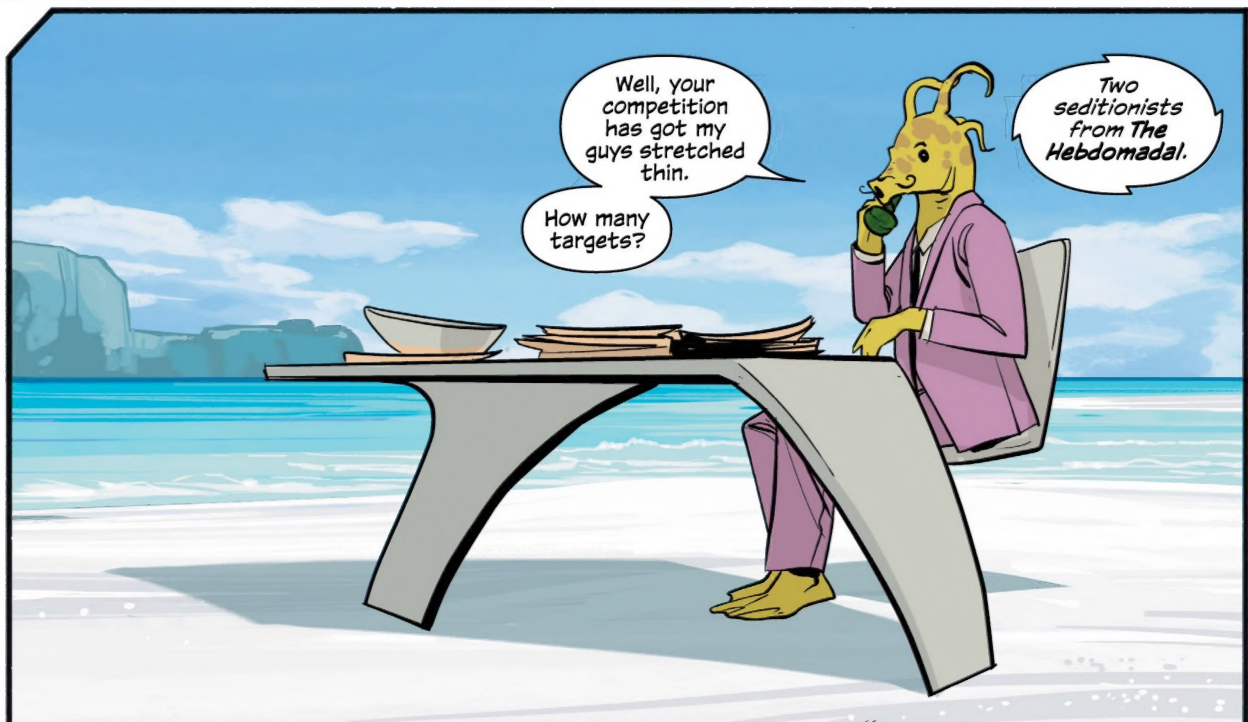
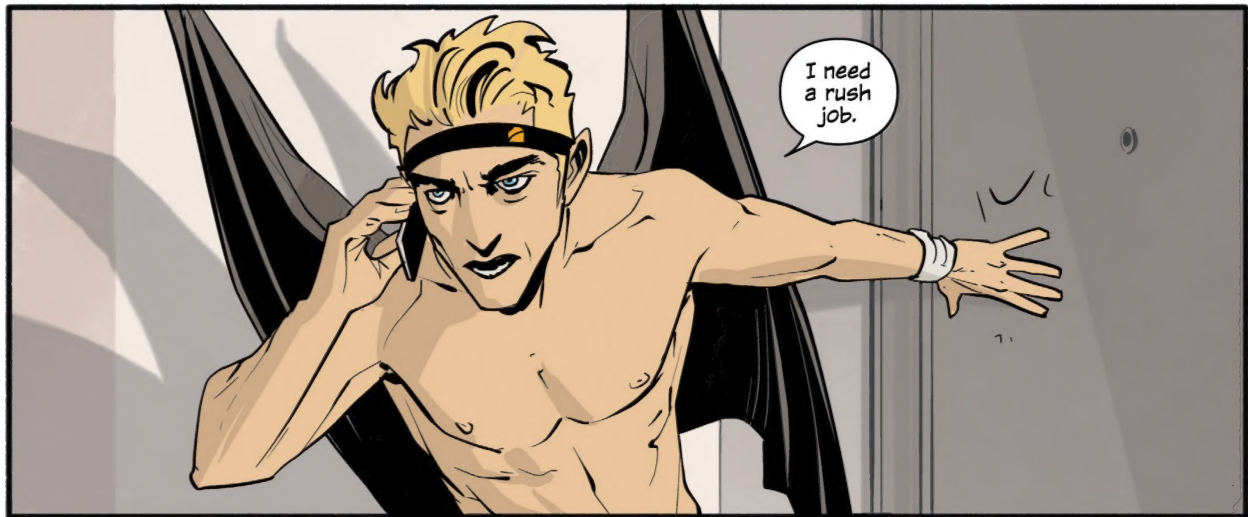
Terribly tragic if you ask me, but who am I to judge the mores of a fledgling young society?



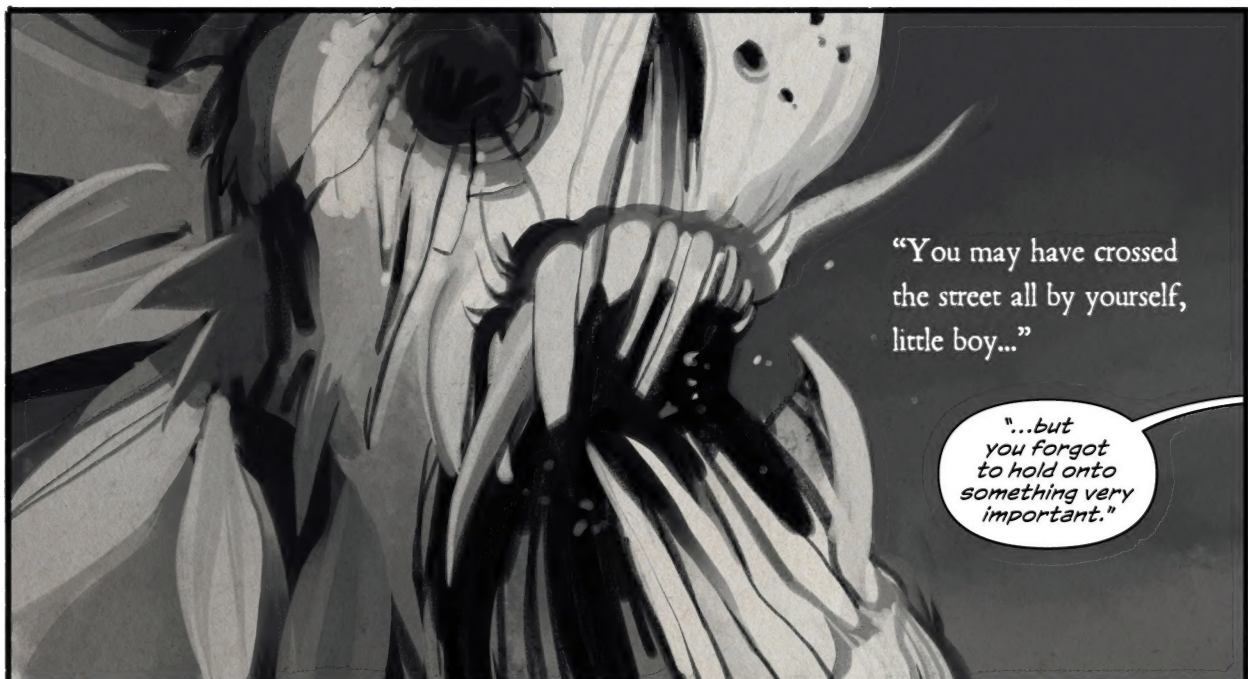
Anyway. I know I can't **force** you not to publish something, but I do hope you'll carefully consider everything we've discussed before you make your final decision.

Be safe now.

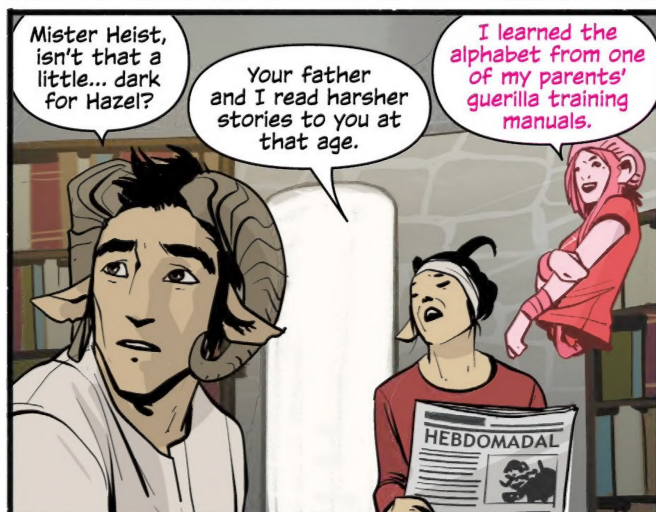




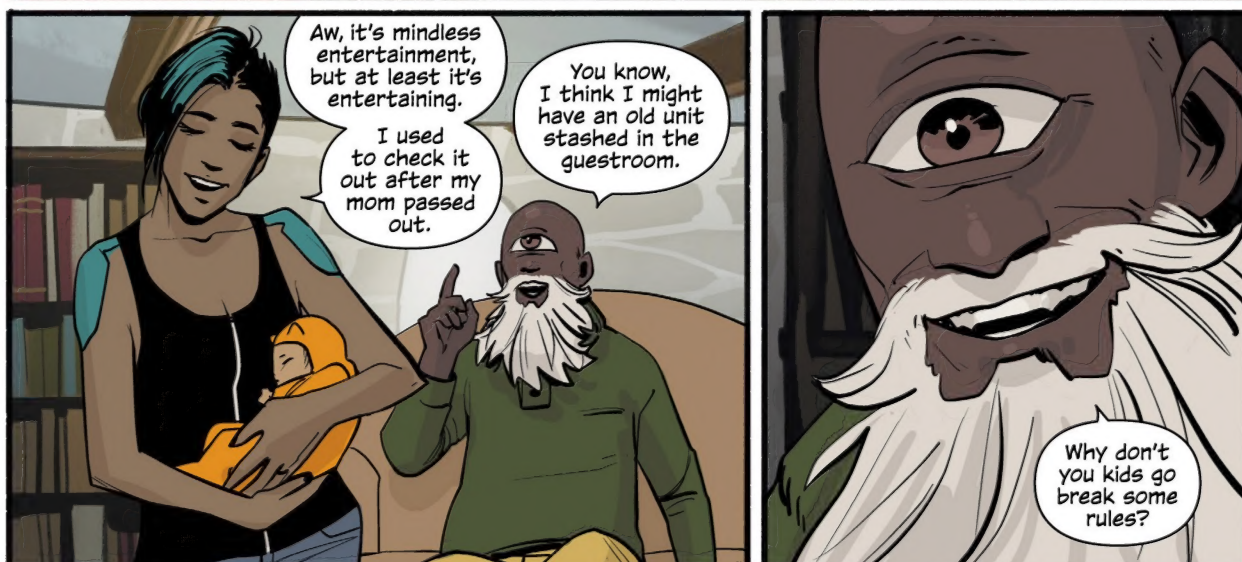
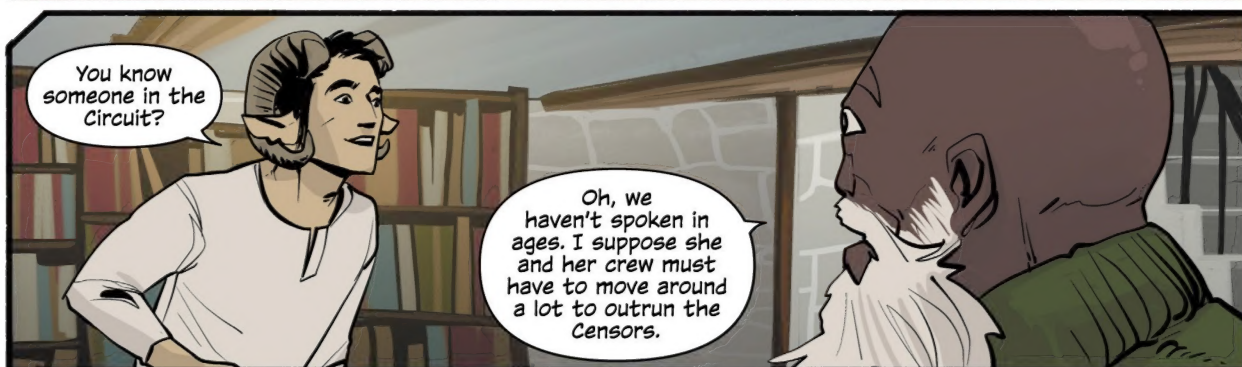




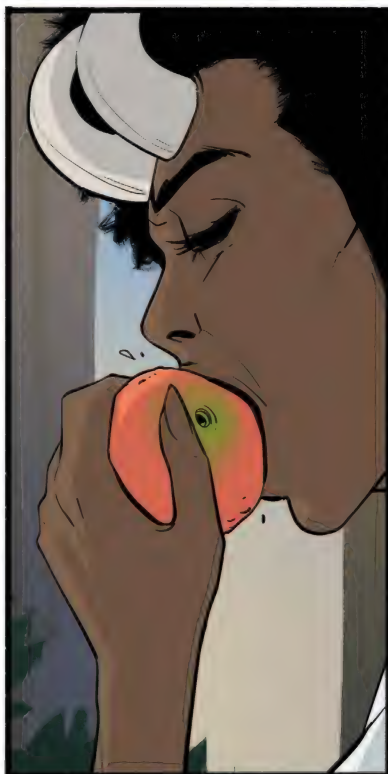
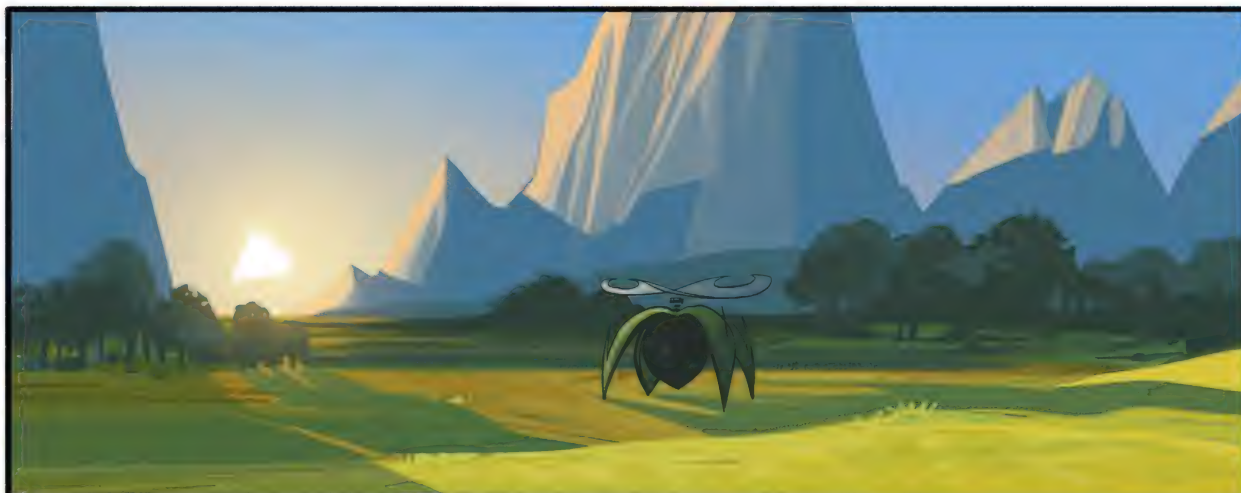














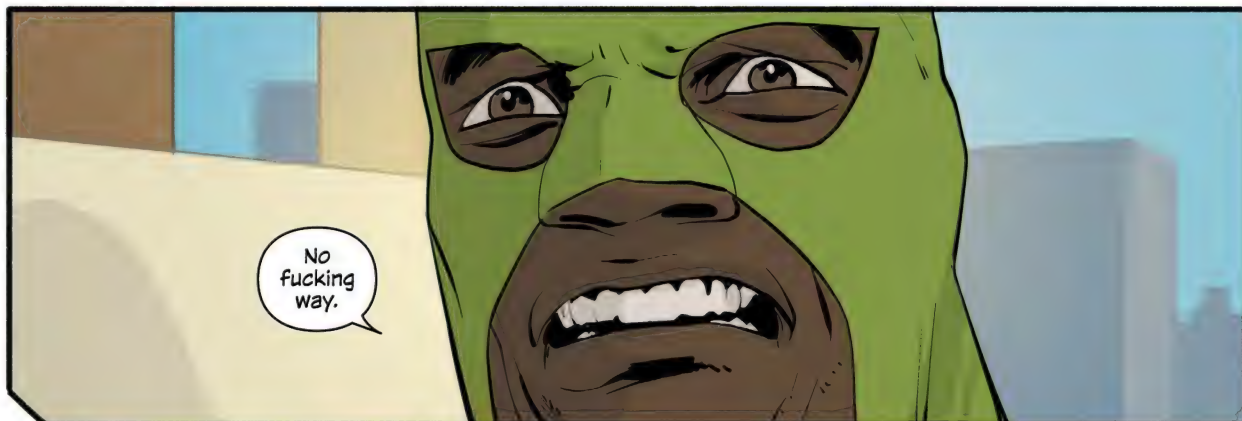


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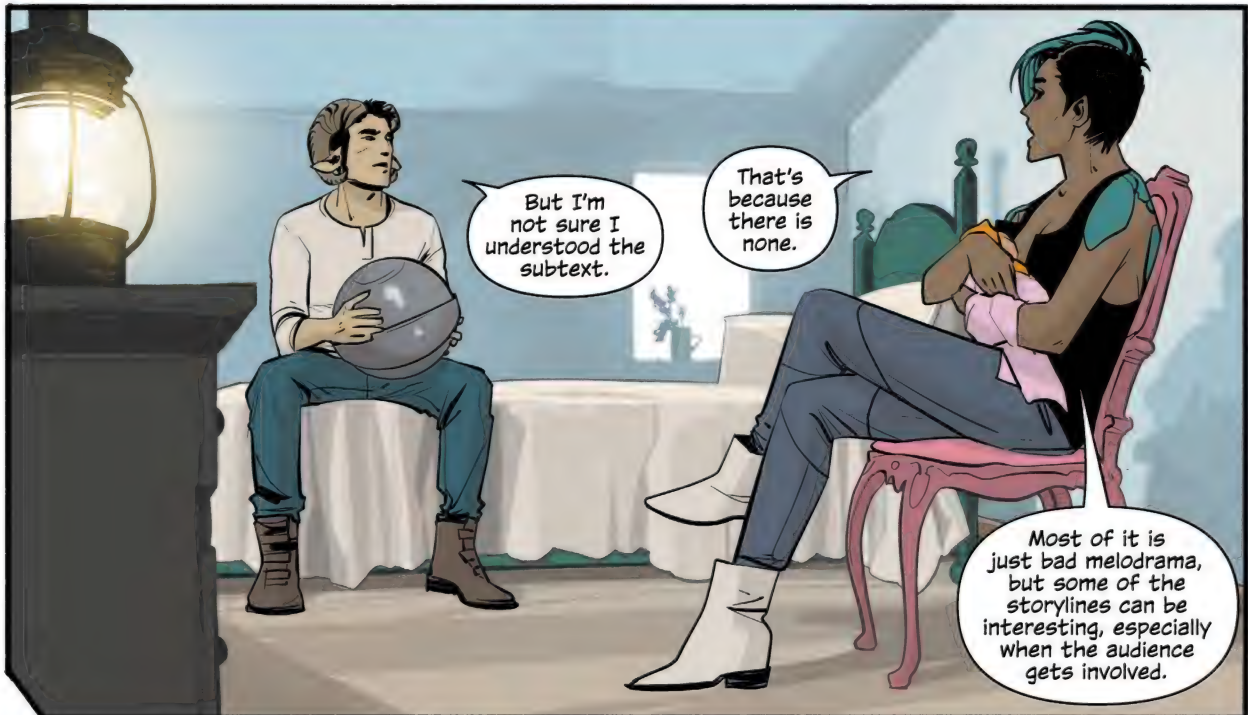








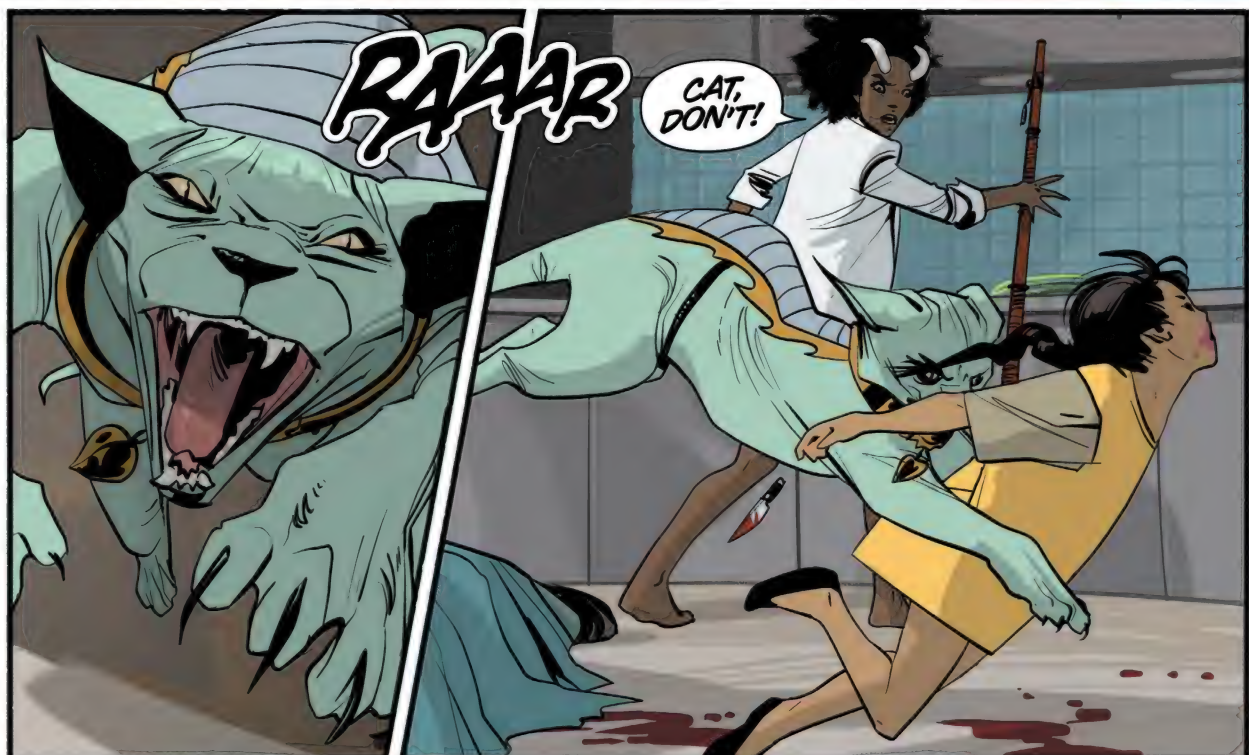




















RRRRR

Then we still have a shot at saving him.

But we have to go straight to Quietus.

RARR

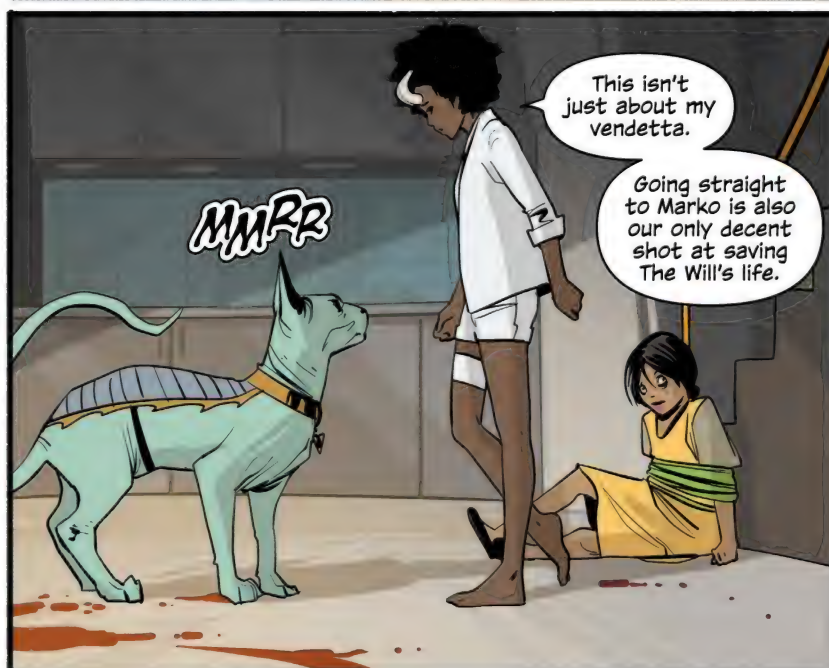


He'll *die* long before we ever reach a proper emergency room.

And I don't know enough combat surgery to cast a spell for a wound like that.



But my ex-boyfriend does.



MMRR

This isn't just about my vendetta.

Going straight to Marko is also our only decent shot at saving The Will's life.



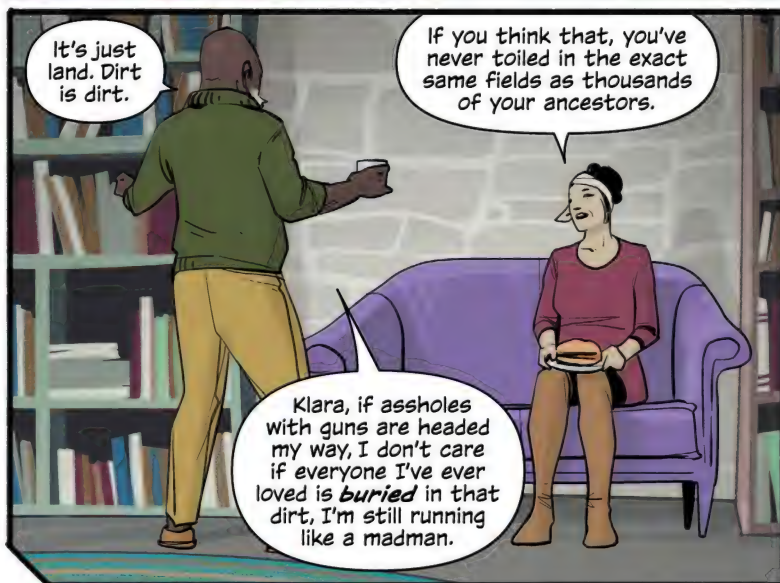
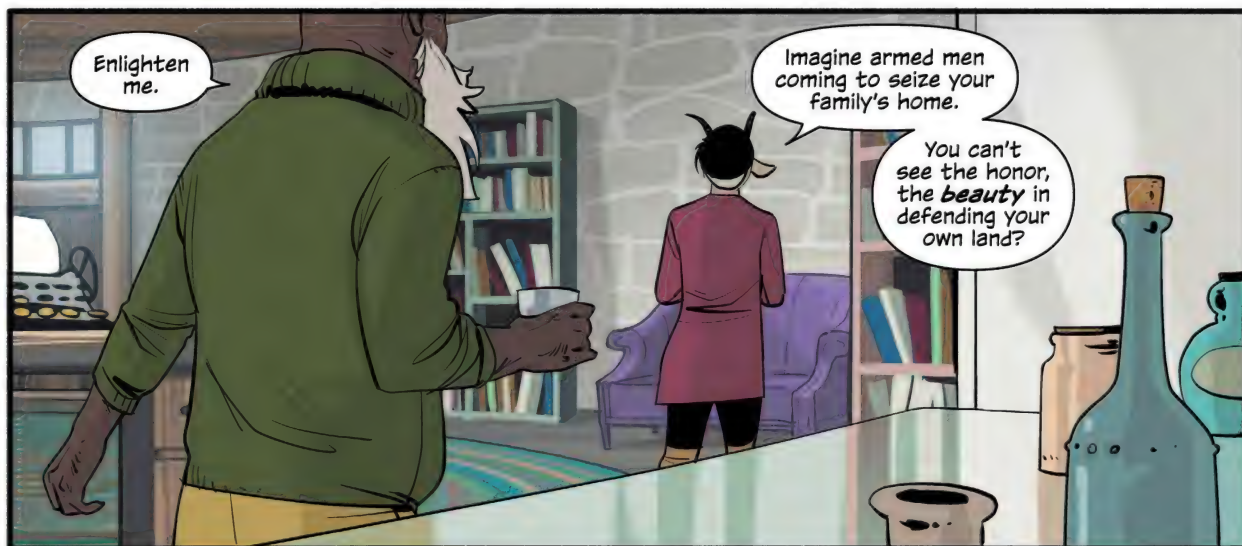
I swear.



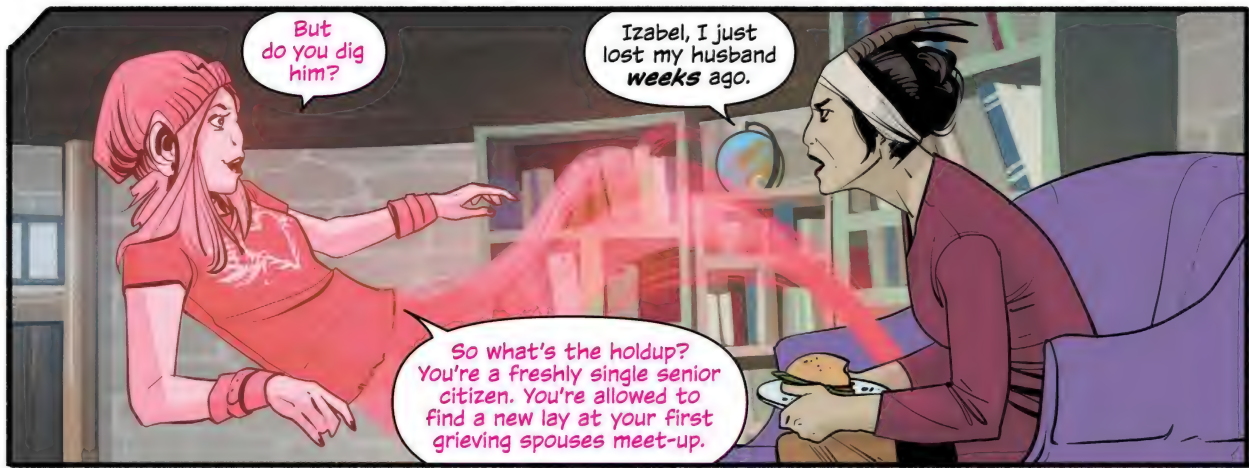
Later that evening, my  
parents and I slept while  
the couple actually  
plotting my future  
conspired.

















After that, things  
got action-packed.





# TO BE CONTINUED

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Well, if there's one thing we all love, it's a Fiona Staples splash page.

But if there are two things we all love, the other would apparently be filling out bizarre reader surveys, because the *To Be Continued* H.Q. is still overflowing with your responses to last letter column's questionnaire.

We'll run the unexpected results next month, but for now, your probing queries and commentary about our last few thought-provoking issues:

Dear To Be Continued,

*What's a better car, the Ghostbusters' Ecto-1 or the Adam West-era Batmobile?*

Thanks,

Peyton F.

Rack City, NV

Peyton, with that one postcard, you managed to singlehandedly destroy a full day's productivity. Any future shipping delays are on your head.

It's beyond a Sophie's Choice for me, but I'm ultimately going to side with the old-school Batmobile. A clearly less-conflicted Kid Staples texts, "Ecto-1, because I was alive for that!" Break the tie for us, Fonografiks?

**"Atomic batteries to Power! Turbines to Speed!"**

Dear Saga Family,

You are cordially invited to the matrimonial union of Texan comic book nerds Neil Corbett and Sally Steele.

We met in college five years ago, and hope to be able to maintain a love as true and lasting as Alana and Marko's. We find your stories forever inspiring, a transfixing composite of high literary and visual art. Also, that five panel exchange with Sophie in Chapter 14 was heartbreaking.

With much love,

Neil Corbett & Sally Steele

Ft. Worth, TX

Congratulations, Neil and Sally! Very sorry we won't be able to attend your big day, but if you're wondering who sent that Rachel Ray Extra Virgin Olive Oil and Vinegar Dispensers Set (Orange) off your Target wedding registry, wonder no more!

(This should guarantee that we get a few more invites, but be warned that our entire creative team WILL show up to at least one wedding someday, and the idea won't seem quite as cute when Eric Stephenson is getting into a drunken brawl with your aunt's new boyfriend.)

Dear Brian,

Favorite Tolkien novel?

Just curious,

Alice M.

Parma, OH

I'm mortified to say that I've never read any Tolkien (especially mortified because our series was just recognized at this year's distinguished British Fantasy Awards—Parenthetical Brag!). Nothing personal, just a cultural blind spot I hope to correct with my kids when they're old enough for Orcs.

But if it's any consolation (it won't be), while I haven't read any of his novels or seen the filmed adaptations, I HAVE logged hundreds and hundreds of make-believe "miles" in the official *Lord of the Rings* penny slot machines across various Las Vegas casinos.

You see, in a lot of ways, I'm your grandmother.

Anyway, I was just reading how Disney will soon be phasing out their licensed *Star Wars* and *Marvel* themed slot machines, which apparently aren't consistent with the company's family friendly brand. I approve of this decision wholeheartedly, especially because it opens the door for slot machines based on *Saga*, a series whose values are just about perfectly aligned with those of the adult gaming industry.

Fiona and I look forward to discussing all serious licensing offers, preferably aboard some kind of private aircraft with its own sushi chef, thanks.

Brian, Fiona, and Hamburger,

We are the *Fantastic Ladies Comics Club*, a brand new women's book club that meets at our LCS, *Fantastic Comics*, in Berkeley, CA. For our last meeting we decided to read the first two volumes of *Saga* and, no surprise, we all loved it!

Our book club is made up of long time comics readers and newbies alike, but we have all found *Saga* equally approachable and engaging. We love the way you subtly address subjects that are often ignored in genre stories, but that many of us find relevant to our personal experiences. Everyone in the group appreciated the diversity of characters, both in the sense of much needed racial diversity and the wide array of non-humanoid characters Fiona dreams up. We also really loved the way gender has been addressed so far. It has been great to see how the reality of women and men holding roles of equal power and authority has been treated as a nonissue. The way in which you frequently subvert expected gender roles was also one of our favorite observations, particularly in the context of violence and nonviolence. Actually, addressing nonviolence directly in a comic is incredibly rare and seemed to strike a chord with quite a few of us.

On a less political note, we all can't shut up about Fiona's art. *Giants* aside, every page has been gorgeous! And Brian has been writing with such realism that we can't help finding likeable or relatable qualities in even the most loathsome characters. *Giants* included!



Over the course of our discussion we came up with some questions for the whole creative team:

1. Your humanoid characters are incredibly racially diverse. Is that sort of a mission statement for the comic or does it just come naturally as the characters are designed?

2. How do Freelancers get their names? Their "The" prefix implies it might be a title? Will we ever see how The Will became The Will?

3. What does Lying Cat's voice sound like? We realized we all had really different ideas, from something deep and gender neutral to a very feline hiss to a yowl to the voice of the Queen of England. How does she sound when you hear her voice?

4. Most importantly, how does Hamburger feel about the popularity of a cat character? Does he see it as a betrayal?

Thanks again for your incredible series! We're all counting down the days to the next issue.

Yours obsessively,

The Fantastic Ladies Comics Club

P.S. Here is a picture we took after an hour and a half discussing Saga. We're all saying "Lying!"



How fucking cool is that?

Thank you so much for the kind words and careful reads, most fantastic ladies. And all hail numbered questions:

1. Much appreciated, but credit for that goes to Fiona, who really cares that this book looks more like a reflection of our world than of other sci-fi/fantasy stories.

2. Some of that may be addressed in future adventures, so mum's the word.

3. I love that you all have different ideas of what Lying Cat sounds like, so I don't want to unduly influence your inner voices, but I have mentioned in the past that I imagine she sounds a little bit like my wife (so equal parts feline yowl and Elizabeth II).

4. Royalties from Saga helped pay for the operation that fixed my loyal dachshund's spine, so Hamburger K. Vaughan (who's still stitched up like a football and is quite over your Frankenweenie jokes, thank you very much) is reluctantly grateful to Lying Cat (and you fine readers) for helping to provide him with better health care than most of the human world receives.

Dear Brian & Fiona,

This comic reminds me of my father, who was a huge influence in my life... (Fade out, flashback scene).

I remember being a little girl and my dad bringing me to hobby stores and comic shops and letting me pick out

whatever I wanted, letting me stay up late to watch sci-fi and horror movies. He pushed me to read, imagine and create. He was the one who understood me and said that I could be anything I wanted to be, even the heroes I read about in comic books. I wish he was still around, I know he would have loved this series, it's right up his alley. Makes me miss him, but hey, maybe there's an afterlife and he's reading it with me!

Thanks for taking us on this amazing journey! Can't wait to see what happens next!

Jessica C.

Los Angeles, CA

P.S. I have enclosed a picture of my dad in second grade. I have no idea why... maybe it's creepy but it could be a cool reminder for you guys of who your work reaches.

I love that picture of your Pop as a kid, Jessica. Thanks for trusting us with it.

Dear To Be Continued,

I got hooked on Saga while volunteering at a bookstore in Chicago called Open Books. It is this really great used bookstore where 100% of the profits go to support literacy programs. The bookstore manager here is a big Saga fan and when the first trade volume came out he made sure that we were selling it in the store.

I am a self-proclaimed bibliophile and science fiction nerd, but I had never really gotten into comics before. I had run into Brian's work once before when my roommate had to read *Pride of Baghdad* for a college class. He passed it on to me afterwards and I was really impressed by it. So, I thought I would give Saga a chance, especially because so many of my friends seemed enamored with it. I picked up the first volume at Open Books and was completely blown away. It was like all my nerdy, fanboy daydreams were coming alive in front of my eyes. The world you created is so fun to explore and Fiona's artwork is breathtaking. I especially love that Hazel is not some sort of savior, she isn't supposed to fulfill any prophecy, and no one is fighting against the forces of evil, it's just a story about a family trying to survive.

I was so hooked after finishing issues 1-6 that I immediately ran out to my local comic bookstore (Third Coast Comics in Chicago's Edgewater neighborhood) to get the following issues. Thank you to everyone at Saga for creating such an amazing work of art and creating a new comic book fan in me. I am going to recommend Saga to everyone who walks into Open Books.

Regards,

Jeremy Leithold-Patt

Chicago, IL

P.S. If you are ever in Chicago you should stop by Open Books (213 W. Institute Pl, Chicago), you have a lot of fans here. Also included a bookmark with my letter, because who doesn't like getting bookmarks?

Who doesn't like getting bookmarks? Fascists and movie talkers, that's who. Much obliged, Jeremy, and please send our best to everyone at the awesome-sounding Open Books.

Dear To Be Continued,

I wanted to write in to say thank you. Not only for this great expanding world, story, or wonderful characters, but



also for the look into how Fiona does the art! As an aspiring comic illustrator, her beautiful artwork has been one of multiple inspirations to me to push further to achieve a look I really want, so learning we actually have an incredibly similar method already makes me want to work on it more lately. I didn't think Manga Studio would have been involved for Saga at all.

If you and/or Fiona are ever at a Saint Louis or Chicago convention I'll be sure to come by! Hopefully my costume of a certain eighteyed lady will be finished (not to mention censored... probably won't be hard) and consisting of the moving legs by then, too. 'Cause it sure won't be in time for your contest.

Continue being amazing,  
Elayne Quillin  
Granite City, IL

P.S. Sorry the paper is so plain, most of my cute Japanese imported notebooks are packed away somewhere! So this one had to suffice.

No worries about missing our last costume contest, Elayne, as we'll definitely be announcing a second one in an upcoming letter column. If photos and videos from recent comics conventions are any indication (I'm looking at you, Prince Robot IV with the fully functioning television face-screen), this next one is going to involve some Oscar-level cosplay genius. Stay tuned.

Dear Sir,

Anhedonia is a symptom of depression. It means absence of pleasure, and describes the lack of joy in previously enjoyable activities experienced by people who are depressed. When my girlfriend gets really down your work is one of the few things that will bring some pleasure into her life.

Thank you for the monthly prescription of hedonism provided by you and your colleagues.

Thanks,  
A.J., UK

You want to know what's really sad? How fucking hungry Klara's sandwich this issue makes me every time I look at that stupid page. What is wrong with me?

Sorry to hear about your girlfriend, A.J. But if the internet's taught me anything, it's that the best treatment for crushing, unshakable sorrow is heartwarming pictures of cats...



Dear Fiona and Brian,

I know praise is boring but it's all I have: Saga is wonderful. Here's hoping you'll enjoy my rendition of "Lil' The Will and Lying Kitty" as a (small) token of gratitude.

Merci!

Simon Malette,  
St. Pierre

Okay, given The Will's recent tragic accident, Simon's drawing may be more... bittersweet than heartwarming, but it's still pretty damn adorable, no?

Brian K. Vaughan,

In issue #9's To Be Continued you state that pretty much everything you read in the eighth grade influenced your life. I was surprised that you didn't list The Giver by Lois Lowry there. I realized you might not have read this amazing book, and have sent you a copy in case this is true. I read The Giver in eighth grade and I haven't read anything better since. I've read it at least ten times and its impact never lessens. I even wrote my college entrance essay on it.

Y: The Last Man is the first comic series I ever bought month to month. The first issue of 'Y' is one of the greatest issues of a comic book I have ever read. I started with your book and have been a born again—or born for the first time actually—comic book geek through and through. While I usually buy trades at Megacon in Orlando every year, I still have two things on my weekly pull—The Walking Dead and Saga. Even with my love of TWD, I would still wait months before picking up my pull. Now that Saga is there, I am excited about going to the comic book store again. So, for the second time in my life, you have successfully brought out the weekly geek in me. Congratulations and thank you. You're one of the greatest influences on my life. I hope you'll read The Giver and will add it to your list. If it were ever a comic book, you'd be my pick to write it.

Keep on keepin' on, and pass my praise to Fiona Staples.  
Lacey Rhea  
Gainesville, FL

Whoa, free book! That's way better than a shitty free bookmark. And no, I haven't read The Giver, but I'm greatly looking forward to it. Lacey, for your thoughtful generosity and/or highly literate palm-greasing, you've just scored yourself a trip to the Almighty Prize Drawer, from which Hamburger's just scooped out a signed copy of this very issue, a weird trading card depicting a Betazoid gift box, and some kind of colorful clip mount (?) that may or may not be an archaic piece of drug paraphernalia.

\*\*\*

That's about all the brainpower I have left for tonight, but here's hoping you'll rejoin us next month for the showdown to end all showdowns (until the showdown in the issue after that).

Thanks to everyone who wrote, especially those we didn't print,  
BKV



MATT FRACTION

HOWARD CHAYKIN

# SATELLITE SAM

SEX! DEATH! LIVE TV!



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IF YOU WRONG US SHALL WE NOT REVENGE?

~ William Shakespeare



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# BLACK SCIENCE

NOVEMBER



# RICK REMENDER

# WHO'S NEXT

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